



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 23, 2008

Contact: Chris Conlan (858) 694-2137

## **HANTAVIRUS CONFIRMED IN THREE MORE WILD MICE**

***Residents Are Urged to Take Precautions When Cleaning Garages or Dealing With Mice Infestations***

County Vector Control confirmed today that three wild mice trapped during routine monitoring have tested positive for hantavirus. One harvest mouse was found in the Tijuana River Valley and two Northern Baja mice were found in San Marcos and in Carlsbad, bringing this year's total to 11 mice that have tested positive for the virus. Typically, the County confirms between two and eight hantavirus cases per year; however this year Vector Control has increased its surveillance.

Hantavirus is carried by wild rodents, primarily deer mice. It is found in rodent droppings and urine and can be inhaled by humans when it becomes airborne. The airborne virus can cause a rare illness called Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, or HPS.

Early signs of the illness are similar to the flu, including fatigue, fever, muscle aches, headache, dizziness, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Late stage symptoms of HPS include coughing and shortness of breath, rapidly progressing to severe difficulty breathing. The illness can sometimes be fatal.

"As the weather begins to cool, rodents may seek shelter inside residences. Mice can fit through openings as small as a dime, so be sure to repair holes and gaps that might allow them to enter a home or building," said Gary Erbeck, Director of the Department of Environmental Health. "If you do have rodent droppings inside, be sure to protect yourself by using the wet cleaning method."

**DO NOT sweep or vacuum rodent droppings and urine.** Use the method below:

- Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup of water) onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps and surrounding areas, and let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning. Clean with a sponge or a mop.
- Place disinfected waste into two plastic bags, seal them and discard in the trash.
- Wash gloves in the bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method. Thoroughly wash your bare hands with soap and water.

For more information, please visit the County's Vector Control Web site at [www.sdvector.com](http://www.sdvector.com), or call 858-694-2888.

###